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Lesson 647

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Beloved Adhyapya:

One of the things I want to talk to you about tonight is the matter of that form of deep concentration which is called the Trance. I realize the problem of the word Trance is a very vexed one in all Occult circles, most Schools, even the most widely known, condemning its use. Some of these object strongly, they say that in the Trance the Soul is in a Passive State and to be in a Passive State on the Inner Planes is to invite Obsession. Such a condemnation shows that there has been no practical experience of Trance, otherwise it would be known that there is more than one kind of Trance, and the obsessions that may justly apply to one have no bearing on another. Passivity, under certain conditions, is not dangerous or even harmful.

There are only two kinds of Trance which can justly be called Passive. The Trance into which the Hypnotist throws his subject and the Trance into which a certain type of Psychics fall spontaneously. The two other types, which we will call the Trance of Vision and the Trance of Projection, are intensely active, with full Consciousness and Control on the Inner Planes.

Now, Hypnotic Trance, as you know, is induced by very powerful suggestions, reinforced by Psychic manipulation of the Etheric Double, so that Consciousness is, as it were, thrown "out of gear," the physical and Etheric bodies are pushed slightly out of coincidence by the manipulation of the Etheric Forces of the Hypnotist. It is for this reason that Suggestion, and Suggestion alone, (that is to say, purely mental manipulation) is sufficient to induce these Trances. Hypnotists have to have the Power, natural or acquired, of operating Etherically and manipulating the Etheric Double of their subjects. It is not everybody who has this Power, and, therefore, it is not everybody who can hypnotize. If the Hypnotist is incompetent, malicious, or employs an undesirable method, he can, of course, do as much damage to his patient as a bad surgeon. The Hypnotic Trance is Plastic Surgery of the Mind, for this reason it is very seldom used, most operators preferring to rely upon a light Hypnosis, in which the patient is drowsy and abstracted, fully Conscious but lulled and dreamy. This is all that is required for any manipulations of the Mind that are to be performed for the benefit of the patient. The Cataleptic Trance is only induced in the course of Research work. It does no harm in the hands of a skillful operator, but it is not a thing to be played with and it is not a thing to undergo frequently.

The Uninitiated Psychic who goes into Spontaneous Trance is a person whose Consciousness tends to "slip its gears." This slipping of the gears of Consciousness tends to absent-mindedness, or even to Catalepsy. In both Hypnosis and Psychic Trance the Soul of the Subject is merely thrown out of coincidence with the centers in the Physical, which are the points of contact with Consciousness. Consequently the body is Passive, possibly rigid, because the flexor and extensor muscles are no longer coordinated and they both contract simultaneously, thereby immobilizing each other.

In such cases the Mind is partly Passive. It is that dreamy state we observe in a person under light Hypnosis. Any other Mind, incarnate or ex-carnate, which comes into touch with it finds it Hyper-suggestible. In this state, anything may happen and it only needs some slight knowledge of the denizens of the Astral Plane to suggest some possibilities of unpleasantness.

It is a person with this peculiar Psychic constitution who, when developed, becomes the Trance-Medium with which we are all familiar in Spiritualistic Circles. The work is not without its risks, but we shall receive nothing outstanding in any walk of Life unless we are

prepared to take risks, and in experienced and trustworthy hands the risks of Trance-Mediumship are not undue.

If the leader of the Circle is skilled and conscientious he will be able to take his Medium in and out of this stage without permitting any untoward happenings to occur. Such an operation has its uses in the field of Psychic experimentation. It is not, therefore, to be decried unreservedly and neither, on the other hand, is it to be recommended, except for Research experiments in the hands of an experienced operator who is able to command suitable conditions, the subject being a person of good mentality and sound health, and with an intellectual appreciation of the Metaphysics of the work in hand.

The true Occult Trance, the "Temple-Sleep" of the Adept, is in quite a different category from the type previously considered. The Initiate who, by his knowledge of the necessary technique, throws himself deliberately into Trance is no more Passive than the diver swimming under water. It is only by the most strenuous activity that a swimmer can overcome the natural buoyancy of his body and descend to any depth; so it is with the Mind, it is only by concentrated effort that you can hold the Mind to Super-Consciousness. As soon as the effort is relaxed it will return to the normal, and trance merges into sleep and vision gives place to dreams.

It is this tendency of Trance to merge into sleep which is the principal difficulty with which the Occultist has to contend. There are two weak spots in his defensive which we will call the "Cusps of Sleep." The transition from waking Consciousness to sleep, and from sleep to Psychic Consciousness is always thru a Psychic "dead center." A wheel which is reversing its revolution has to stop for a moment, however brief. When Consciousness passes from Objective to Subjective and then out to Objective again, the Mind has to become a complete blank, all associations and trains of thought have to be broken and a fresh start made in the new mode. The person who goes into either the Hypnotic or Mediumistic Trance gets as far as this dead center and then stops there, until pushed out of it by an incarnate Force, usually the Will of another, whether that of an incarnate Hypnotist or an incarnate Spirit. The technique of the Occultist teaches him to swing himself over this dead center by the means of an association of ideas, which stretches out like a bridge-head across the abyss so that he has only to make a comparatively small spring to alight on the far shore.

The Bridge-Head thus projected out into the Unseen starts as a pictorial imagination and passes gradually into the Trance of Vision, and when this occurs, the attention is withdrawn from the Objective and therefore, to all intents and purposes the Experimentor is unconscious, tho he can be roused without any difficulty. He is not out of his body and functioning on the Astral Plane, but is looking into the Astral as thru a periscope, or what is called the "Astral Tube."

In the Trance of Projection, however, the "Body of Light" is forming on the Astral, and Consciousness is projected into it. The Physical Body is then in a truly Cataleptic condition, all Consciousness being withdrawn. You will get more Light on the subject if you observe what happens to the beginner in Occultism who is striving to master the technique of Trance. He will achieve with comparative readiness the Trance of Vision, for as soon as the attention is withdrawn from the Physical, the Astral Plane of Picture Consciousness opens up. You have only to acquire sufficient Power of Concentration to be able to turn away attention from the Physical Sensation, for the Phantasmagoria of the Subjective Sphere to begin passing before the mental sight.

Of course, it is one thing to look into the Kaleidoscope of the Astral, and another thing to pick out and follow any desired vision

or thought, but that consideration I am not entering upon now.

Unless, however, by deliberate effort of Will the connection of dream Consciousness is maintained, by either speaking aloud or writing down what is passing across the Inner Sight, the Trance of Vision will speedily change into the Trance of Projection, and the Experimenter will find that he has apparently left his body and is actually in the midst of his vision and taking part in it, instead of seeing it as a series of mental pictures.

However, continuing with the matter of going into the Trance: After a considerable amount of experience you have reached the point where you are able to close down Objective Consciousness and obtain a clear focus of the Inner Vision. At first you will find that the Subjective pictures will be merely an elaboration of what the Psychologists call Hypnogogies, a small bright picture which sometimes lies in the back of the Mind as sleep encroaches on Consciousness, and also, the more rarely, in moments of abstraction. You will have developed expertness in focusing these and holding them steady, one at a time, before the Inner Vision, and become a part of them. And then, one day, in front of this Magic Mirror of your Vision, you sense something which is an Actuality among all of the shadows. The Experimenter has heretofore been perceiving Thought-Forms in the Racial Subconsciousness; what he sees now, altho it has the same appearance as the rest, is an Actuality, and you instinctively know it to be that, because you feel it to be ensouled, as deep calls to deep and the Spark of Divine Spirit within you reacts to the Spark of Divine Spirit within the appearance that presents itself to your Inner Sight. To describe it more clearly than that is impossible, but just as even a child will know death from sleep, so the Seer, when he perceives that which has Life behind it, ought to be able to distinguish it from the swarming pictures which are, after all, but Images left upon the retina of the Planet. But, tho he may know of the existence of such Beings as we are describing, theoretically, if he has never actually met one, he may mistake unusually vivid Picture-Images for such an Encounter, but the Actuality once seen, he will be very unlikely to make the mistake again, for he will find the Real Presence has an effect upon him which is never equalled by the Vision of Pictures.

The Initiated Occultist has methods of recognizing these Presences and finding out who and what they are, but there is nothing but experience which will tell the Uninitiated Experimenter whether he is dealing with an Actuality or not, and that is where many Psychic experiences go wrong. The Occultist knows it may be the subtle form of another Occultist functioning in the Trance of Projection; it may be the Earth-bound Soul of a person who has passed on, but which for some reason, which we will not go into now, has not yet gone clear of the Material Plane; or it may be the Appearance presented by one of those Souls of a Higher Development than the average of Humanity, who in the Western expression, "has won freedom from the Wheel of Birth and Death," having nothing further to learn from embodiment in Matter.

It is important, in the two former types of Entities, for the Experimenter to be able to maintain his contacts with his physical environment and report what he sees; if, however, the Encounter is with the third kind of Entity, the matter is on a different Plane. The effect of such an Encounter is so to grip the attention or overmaster the Mind of the Experimenter that the Trance of Vision immediately changes into the Trance of Projection and he finds himself withdrawn from the body and facing his Visitor on his own Plane of Existence.

In the Bonds of the Eternal Brotherhood,
Sri Dayananda,
S.C.